

We've finished the May 26, 2015 Bulletin 120 (B120) forecast update. The forecast includes observed conditions through the morning of May 26, 2015. The forecast is posted at <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/iudir?s=b120up>.

Forecast Summary:

The projected median April-July runoff in the major Sierra river basins ranges from 3 percent of normal on the Tule River to 40 percent of normal for the Total Inflow to Shasta Lake and the Sacramento River above Bend Bridge forecast points. All forecasts, except the Sacramento River at Bend Bridge and Feather River, increased due to the precipitation that fell over the past week. All forecasts are at or below 21 percent of average, except Total Inflow to Shasta Lake and the Sacramento River above Bend Bridge. All river basins from the Feather River south are forecasted to set new low full natural flow records for the April-July period, most by a significant volume.

Runoff:

Through the first 26 or 27 days of May, all rivers in the Sierra are flowing below 40 percent of normal. All flows except the Inflow to Shasta Lake, the Sacramento River above Bend Bridge, and the Tuolumne River are flowing at or below 20 percent of the May average.

Precipitation:

Precipitation for the 2015 water year accumulated at the following rates of average:

Region/Index	WY accumulated precipitation through May 26, 2015 Units = percent of average
Northern Sierra 8-Station Index	74 (35.2 inches)
San Joaquin 5-Station Index	45 (17.4 inches)
Tulare Lake 6-Station Index	44 (12.1 inches)

Thus far in the water year, the Northern Sierra index was above average for only October (123 percent) and December (181 percent) and the Tulare Lake index was above average for only December (105 percent). The San Joaquin index had no month in which the precipitation was above average – the closest was December (95 percent).

Snowpack:

The snowpack as of the morning of May 26, 2015 stands at the following (based on snow sensors):

Region	Snow Water Equivalent (inches)	% of April 1 Average	% of May 26 Average
Northern	0.1	0	0
Central	0.1	0	0
Southern	0.1	0	0
Statewide	0.1	0	0

The peak snowpack for the water year for each region are as follows:

Region	Peak Snow Water Equivalent (inches)	% of April 1 Average	Timeframe
Northern	6.0	20	Late January
Central	6.3	21	Mid-February
Southern	5.3	20	Early March

Statewide	5.6	19	Mid-February
-----------	-----	----	--------------

Weather and Climate Outlooks:

The six-day weather forecast indicates cumulative totals less than 0.25 inch of precipitation over the northern area of the Sacramento River watershed. No other precipitation is expected over the Sierra Nevada. Freezing levels, currently near 13,500 feet, will increase slightly through Saturday and will drop to near 11,000 feet during the rest of the period.

The NWS Climate Prediction Center (CPC) one-month outlook for June, issued May 21, indicates equal chances of above or below normal precipitation for all of the state. The same outlook predicts increased chances of above normal temperature statewide.

The CPC three-month (June-July-August) outlook, issued May 21, indicates equal chances of above or below normal precipitation statewide. The same outlook predicts increased chances of above normal temperature statewide.

El Niño conditions are present. Positive equatorial sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies continue across most of the Pacific Ocean. There is an approximately 90 percent chance that El Niño conditions will continue through the Northern Hemisphere summer of 2015, and a greater than 80 percent chance it will last through 2015.

It is imperative to remember that spring offers the least predictability in the state of the El Niño Southern Oscillation for the coming winter and that conditions that might point to such an event have occurred in the past and failed to produce. Late summer is a more realistic time frame to assess the potential of an El Niño event and whether or not it will have any influence on the coming winter season. As a whole, El Niño offers zero predictability of hydrologic outcome for the northern part of the state.

Last Update:

This week's forecast is the last one for the season. If you would like guidance or have questions before next forecast season, please contact a member of the Snow Surveys staff. We are happy to help.